



## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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### **Jon Rockett Recognized With National Award for Educational Outreach at Powell River Project**

*- DMME recognizes extension agent's achievement and partnership with agency -*

**Big Stone Gap, VA** – As an extension agent at Virginia Tech's Powell River Project (PRP) for the past 18 years, Jon Rockett has delivered coal mine related environmental education to over 30,000 students. On Monday evening at the Project's Research and Education Center, he was presented with special recognition from the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy for his many accomplishments, which now include a national public outreach award. Appropriately, the recognition was provided at a dinner for a group of teachers from across Virginia who are participating in a summer education program "Coal to Electricity" sponsored by the Powell River Project and the Eastern Coal Council.

This spring, the Interstate Mining Compact Commission (IMCC) announced the recipients of its sixth annual mineral education awards. Rockett, an Area Extension Agent, Mined Land Development and Natural Resource Management at the Powell River Project in Wise, Virginia, won the 2006 Public Outreach Award. Jon was presented the award at the IMCC's annual meeting held in Bismarck, North Dakota, April 30 – May 3, 2006. Begun in 1999, the mineral education awards are presented each year in two categories: the mining awareness educator category and the public outreach category.

The PRP is a program of Virginia Tech involving landowners, coal companies, mine regulatory agencies, citizens, and others in research and demonstration concerning mined land management and restoration. The PRP conducts research and education programs to enhance restoration of mined lands and to benefit communities and business in southwestern Virginia's coalfield region. Research has focused on developing practical, cost-effective solutions to natural resource problems in central Appalachian coal mining areas. Topics addressed include mine reclamation and environmental protection practices by coal mining operations; use of reclaimed mine lands for forests, agriculture

and homes; and water and timber resources.

Education programs disseminate the results of completed research, with the goal of putting research results into practice. At the PRP Research and Education Center (REC), Jon has ably demonstrated that mine reclamation offers an excellent opportunity to illustrate sound natural resource management and to contribute to science education at numerous grade levels.

Early programs in the PRP outreach to local schools were intended simply to expose students to surface mining and reclamation. During the 1990's Jon and other PRP personnel realized visits could do much more than just "show" mining and reclamation. PRP personnel began working with teachers to integrate site visits into the structured learning activities that reinforce the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL). Education programs at the Center are now targeted and tailored to individual SOLs established for specific grade levels. The REC is also the research site host for the University of Virginia's College at Wise Summer Governor's School. Several Virginia Tech classes also incorporate visits to the REC into their educational curricula. In addition, Jon and the REC have hosted numerous meetings for regulatory personnel involved with mining and reclamation, as well as officials from the Federal Office of Surface Mining and other groups.

Jon's numerous outreach and educational offerings focus on ensuring a better understanding of issues associated with mining and natural resource development. For the past 18 years, he has been a strong voice to objectively portray mining and reclamation. With training and career experience in forestry, science and as a government regulator, Jon's outreach has dispelled many myths associated with coal mining and reclamation. His work has fostered a greater understanding and appreciation of both our renewable and non-renewable natural resources.

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***The Interstate Mining Compact Commission is a multi-state governmental agency / organization that represents the natural resource interests of its member states. The Commission was established in 1970 with the entry of its first four states, and 15 additional states have enacted legislation bringing them into the Compact. Three additional states have become associate members as they pursue enactment of legislation which will make them full members. The states are officially represented by their Governors who serve as Commissioners. The Commission operates through several committees composed of duly appointed representatives of the Governors from their respective Departments of Natural Resources or Environmental Protection.***

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